



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Blue Ridge Ranger District
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File Code: 2720

Date: May 1, 2009

Dear Forest Stakeholder:

I am asking for your comments on the following applications for a special use authorization to use National Forest System (NFS) lands as follows:

- ❖ The Georgia Cycling Grand Prix (GCGP) is requesting a special use permit to conduct the finish line activities of a 10k individual cycling time trial up Brasstown Bald. The event would use National Forest System (NFS) lands at the Brasstown Bald parking lot and visitor center. The event would begin on Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 7 AM and end at noon the same day. This event would use the parking lot to set up an expo/food area, shade tents, and portable toilets and the visitor center would be used to set up the finish line for the top 100 riders. The Georgia Cycling Grand Prix event is expected to have up to 500 participants and 500 spectators. The start of the event would take place entirely off NFS lands and the majority of the route would occur on state highways, which are under the jurisdiction of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The event would require that the portions of route be closed in the interest of safety. Georgia Spur 180 would be closed late Friday evening and remain closed until noon on Saturday to allow for event staff to set up the temporary facilities (shade tents, electronic timers, route signage, etc.), secure their equipment, and provide a safe corridor for participants and spectators of the event. One lane of Georgia 180 would be closed near the starting point at Enota Organic Farms (westbound lane only). These road closures would be coordinated and conducted through GDOT since the Forest Service does not permit nor regulate Georgia state highways. The event would consist of an individual time trial in which participants would be started at 15 second intervals. No ground disturbing activities will take place and all trash and temporary facilities would be removed by GCGP at the conclusion of the event. Similar events have been conducted at this location in the past and no adverse effects have been observed following this type of event.
- ❖ The Bicycle Ride Across Georgia, Inc. (BRAG), represented by Jerry J. Colley, is requesting the use of National Forest System land at Unicoi Gap. BRAG has requested to set up a rest stop in the parking area, which would provide water, packaged food items, and portable toilets for ride participants. This event would have approximately 1000 riders and this area would be impacted from approximately 6:30 AM until 9:30 AM on Sunday, June 7, 2009. BRAG has coordinated with state police and local sheriff's office to provide road patrols to help insure the safety of motorists and ride participants. BRAG would be responsible for removing the temporary provisions and trash from NFS land immediately following the event. This use would be non-exclusive and would not take up a significant portion of the parking lot. Unicoi Gap parking area is a gravel surface parking area primarily used by hikers to access the Appalachian Trail. This event is a charity ride supporting the Special Olympics and BRAG is a non profit corporation registered with the Georgia Secretary of State.



- ❖ Dirty Spokes Productions, LLC, represented by Tim Schroer, is requesting the use of National Forest System land at the Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex. Dirty Spokes has requested the use of NFS roads and trails to conduct a 13 mile running race sanctioned by the XTERRA Trail Run Series. This event would have approximately 250 participants and this area would be impacted from approximately 6:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Sunday, September 27, 2009. Rest stops would be set up at the intersection of FS 42, FS 77, and FS 58 (Winding Stair Gap), at the start of the Bull Mountain Trail, and at the intersection of trails 223K (Nimblewill Branch), 223H (Jake Mountain), and FS 28-1 road. Rest stops would include two to three vehicles, tables, chairs, drinking water, and snacks. The rest stops would not be allowed to restrict access or passage of other visitors to the area. Dirty Spokes would be responsible for removing any temporary provisions and trash from NFS land immediately following the event. This use would be non-exclusive and is not expected to create a significant impact to the trails or other users of the area. Dirty Spokes would be required to post notice of this event at the Jake and Bull Mountain trailhead parking areas at least one week in advance of the event to alert other users of the area that a large group may be encountered on the trails. The Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex is a multi-use trail system that has trails suitable for this type of event. Dirty Spokes is a limited liability corporation registered with the Georgia Secretary of State.
- ❖ Georgia Equine Rescue League, Ltd. (GERL), represented by Patty Livingston, is requesting the use of National Forest System land at the Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex. GERL has requested the use of NFS roads and trails to conduct an equestrian ride to raise funds for the Georgia Department of Agriculture and for rescuing other abused horses in Georgia. This event would have approximately 100 participants and the area would be impacted from Friday, October 30, 2009 to Sunday, November 1, 2009. Trails would be marked with flagging and road crossings would be signed to let motorists know that an equestrian event is in progress. In addition to using the trails, GERL has requested to restrict access to the Jake Mountain camping area and trailhead parking during this weekend event to make sure that event participants have enough space to park and camp and to increase safety since there will be a large number of horses and horse haulers on site for this event. Temporary facilities would be installed to help facilitate the event including extra port-a-potties, a large tent for group activities, and camping/equestrian equipment. GERL would be responsible for removing any temporary provisions and trash from NFS land immediately following the event. This use would be exclusive; however, the Bull Mountain parking area would be a good alternative for any non-participants of this event to access the Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex. This activity is not expected to create a significant impact to the trails or other users of the area. GERL would be required to post notice of this event at the Jake and Bull Mountain trailhead parking areas at least one week in advance of the event to alert other users of the area that a large group may be encountered on the trails. The Jake/Bull Mountain Trail Complex is a multi-use trail system that has trails suitable for this type of event. GERL is a non-profit corporation registered with the Georgia Secretary of State.

An analysis is currently being conducted by Forest Service personnel for these types of special use authorization requests, including an assessment of the possible environmental effects of the proposed action on NFS lands, as well as impacts to other users of the areas.

In general, the special use process involves a review of each application received to determine how the request would affect NFS lands and the public's use of these lands. Special use applications must be consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and special orders that apply to the National Forests. Applications must also be consistent with the Forest Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (January, 2004), including all objectives and standards for management of the lands where a proposed special use area(s) is located.

I would like to hear from you regarding the proposed activities before making my decision for these requests. The proposed activities appear to fall into a category of actions that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. This determination, however, will not be finalized until after consideration of your comments and concerns.

To have your comments considered in our decision process, we would appreciate receiving your comments by May 22, 2009. This will help ensure a complete and thorough analysis of these activities. Send your written comments to the Blue Ridge Ranger District at the address provided on the letterhead. You may also comment by phone or fax (see letterhead), by e-mail to chatt_comments@fs.fed.us, or in person at our office on Highway 515 West in Blairsville, Georgia. Please note that you will be sent further correspondence on the proposed action *only* if you request a response in your reply. Feel free to call the Forest Service office if you have additional questions or would like more information regarding these proposed activities.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

Karen McKenzie
District Ranger